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EAST INDIA (QUESTION OF THE SETTLEMENT OF INDIAN AGRICULTURISTS IN TANGANYIKA TERRITORY, AND OF THE FUTURE SYSTEM OF ADMINISTRATION OF THE TERRITORY).

Report by Sir Benjamin Robertson, dated 4th August 1920, regarding the proposed settlement of Indian Agriculturists in Tanganyika Territory,

and

Letter from the Government of India to the Secretary of State for India, dated 10th February 1921.

Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty.

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EAST INDIA (QUESTION OF THE SETTLEMENT OF INDIAN AGRICULTURISTS IN TANGANYIKA TERRITORY, AND OF THE FUTURE SYSTEM OF ADMINISTRATION OF THE TERRITORY).

No. 1.

Sir Benjamin Robertson's Report, dated Dar-es-Salaam, the 4th August 1920, on the proposed settlement of Indian agriculturists in Tanganyika Territory (German East Africa).

On the 24th July I discussed with His Honour the Administrator the proposed settlement of Indian agriculturists in Tanganyika Territory (German East Africa).

2. Sir Horace Byatt put before me certain practical objections to the scheme. The two most important may be briefly summarised as follows :—

(1) There is no vacant land suitable for an Indian reserve. The land which is now vacant is generally vacant because it has some defect. That is, it is either sterile or dense bush or swamp or remote from the main lines of communication. In order, therefore, to obtain really good land for an Indian settlement it would be necessary either—

(*a*) to expropriate the natives, or take land necessary for their natural expansion, which would be contrary to the principle of Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations; or

(*b*) to confiscate some of the privately-owned German plantations which, under the economic clauses of the Peace Treaty, are to be realised subject to the conditions of the original grant.

(2) It is the view of the Administration that small settlers with only a moderate amount of capital, whether white or coloured, face grave risk of disaster in a country where capital for the employment of native labour is essential.

3. Sir H. Byatt also expressed the opinion that the principle of a reserve specially set apart for Indians would be resented by the Indians who are already settled in the Territory, as implying exclusion from free selection throughout the Territory. He considered that, as Indians desire equal treatment, they should be given equal rights with the nationals of other members of the League of Nations to settle on any available land, but that there should be no Indian reserve.

4. After this discussion, I journeyed up the Central Railway as far as Kilossa in order to get some idea of local conditions in the short time at my disposal. I visited the Government experimental farms which were established by the Germans at Morogoro and Kilossa, and the great Otto plantation and several smaller Greek plantations at Kilossa. I also motored for about 150 miles through the country round Kilossa along the rough tracks which serve for roads in the dry season, and saw a considerable amount of native cultivation. On my return journey I stopped at Ruvu, where there is a well-run plantation belonging to a Greek.

5. The principal crops on the plantations are rubber, sisal and cotton. Rubber has been a failure, and thousands of acres must be cleared of the useless rubber trees before they can be profitably cultivated. The sisal and cotton are excellent. The sisal staple runs to 5 feet, and the cotton staple to $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Some of the German plantations, however, are being carelessly cultivated by the contractors, to whom they are being leased annually pending sale as enemy property. The area cultivated by the natives is large. The chief food crop is a variety of sorghum. A fair amount of cotton is also being grown.

The soil is rich and fertile, especally in the Ruvu and Mkata valleys, where there are wide stretches of fine black alluvium. These valleys, however, are mostly under water during the rainy season. Large areas of good soil are unoccupied, and are covered with dense bush and long grass.

6. It is not within my province to consider whether it would be possible, after making every allowance for the expansion of native cultivation, to set apart a suitable area of good land within reasonable distance of the railway for an Indian settlement. Supposing, however, that land were available, there would still be serious obstacles. It is understood from para. 6 of the Secretary of State's Despatch No. 101, dated the 21st August 1919, that the settlement contemplated would be "a reserve "where Indians could practice their traditional methods of agriculture under a system "of small holdings." Any such scheme would be confronted with the following difficulties :—

(1) The climate is unhealthy and malarious. The Indian railway staff, who live in towns where there are medical and sanitary arrangements, or who, if

living elsewhere, are provided with excellent accommodation, frequently suffer from fever; several of those to whom I spoke said that they intended to return to India on the termination of their contracts. Conditions in the bush would, of course, be very much worse. From my own experience in the settlement of jungle tracts in the Central Provinces, I am of opinion that the mortality amongst Indian settlers would be heavy; and I do not think that many Indian cultivators to whom the conditions were fairly explained, would be willing to come here.

(2) The tsetse fly has spread during the war over large areas which were formerly free. In a great part of the Territory it is now impossible for cattle, horses or any domestic animal to live. Even the donkey does not long survive. In time perhaps the fly area may be reduced. But meanwhile all cultivation is done by hand, and porters are practically the only means of transport. When the country settles down, machinery will doubtless be extensively used on the big estates. But it is scarcely possible to imagine the Indian without his bullock practising his traditional methods of agriculture under a system of small holdings.

(3) The climate and the absence of domestic animals mean that the Indian settler would be dependent on native labour; and it is doubtful whether the necessary labour would be forthcoming.

7. From what I have been able to see of the country, and from what I have been told not only by Government officials, but also by business men who are interested in the development of close relations between the Territory and India, and by the Indians themselves who are established here, I am satisfied that the settlement of Indian cultivators would only be possible under close Government supervision and with liberal financial support. It would be necessary to provide special administrative officers, medical officers, agricultural experts, engineers, and so on. Government would have to be prepared to undertake not only the capital outlay, but also to provide an annual subsidy for several years at least. Even then success would be doubtful, and heavy mortality would almost certainly not be avoided. It would obviously be unreasonable to expect that the Administration of the Territory should saddle itself with the trouble, risk and heavy cost of a scheme from which it does not expect to derive advantage. It would presumably be necessary for the Government of India to undertake all responsibility. It is for the Government of India to consider whether they would be justified in embarking on so costly and hazardous a venture. Moreover, the administration by officers of the Government of India of a settlement within the territory of a Government responsible to the League of Nations, would be likely to be a constant embarrassment.

8. There is another aspect of the case. The Secretary of State remarked in para. 7 of his Despatch No. 101, dated the 21st August 1919, that he did not feel sure that a scheme of agricultural colonisation would necessarily coincide with local Indian aspirations; and he pointed out the danger that the concession of an area for exclusive Indian colonisation might be accompanied by, or become a future pretext for, the imposition of restrictions on the entry and free activities of Indians in other parts of the Territory. This danger is fully realised not only by local Indians, but also, it appears, by politicians in India. Resolution No. 17 of the East Africa Indian National Congress held at Nairobi on the 15th and 16th November 1919, was as follows:—

> "That this Congress, in consideration of the services rendered by the Indians in conquering the ex-German East Africa, respectfully prays the League of Nations and the mandatory Power thereunder, to reserve the said territory for the purpose of Indian colonisation."

But the President of the Congress in his letter, dated the 17th January 1920, forwarding a copy of the proceedings to His Honour the Administrator of the Tanganyika Territory, withdrew this resolution in the following terms:—

> "It may not be out of place to mention here that on the advice of political leaders from India and in the hope of sharing equal rights and responsibilities with the other fellow subjects of His Majesty the King in East Africa, Uganda, Zanzibar, and ex-German East Africa Protectorates, my Congress Committee has decided to refrain from asking any preferential treatment for Indians and consequent reservation of ex-German East Africa for Indian colonisation; *vide* Resolution No. 17."

In my opinion, the position which the Indians here have taken up is right. In particular, I venture to doubt whether it would be possible to claim preferential treatment for Indians in one part of the Territory, and equality of treatment everywhere else, as suggested in para. 8 of the Despatch of the 21st August 1919. Such a claim would appear to conflict with the rights of other members of the League of Nations.

9. Finally, Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations requires that in the administration of the Territory there should be applied the principle that the well-

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being and development of its peoples form a sacred trust of civilisation. This is not a matter with which I am directly concerned; but I may perhaps be permitted to suggest that it would not be consistent with this principle to exclude the native peoples from part of the Territory in order to form an Indian reserve.

10. The Indians with whom I have discussed the question in Dar-es-Salaam and elsewhere in the Territory, would appear to endorse these views. They appreciate the policy that the interests of the natives should come first, and they expect no more than equal opportunity with the nationals of other members of the League of Nations. Further, they are generally of opinion that the vacant lands of the Territory are not suitable for the settlement of the Indian cultivators.

11. In my opinion, Indians only require equal opportunity to enable them to play an important part in the development of the Territory. Indian traders, who with their families now number about 15,000, have penetrated to every corner of the country and practically monopolise the retail trade. The retail dealers are largely supplied by Indian merchants. And it is the policy of the European firms whose representatives I have met, to work with the Indians and not against them. The door is open for the closest commercial relations between the Territory and India.

Again, the climate gives the Indian an undoubted advantage over the European in many walks of life. There will be many openings for Indians as professional men, engineers, clerks, and so on, both in private business and in Government service.

Regarding agriculture and the development of the land, I am not prepared to dissent from the considered opinion of the Administrator that small-holders, whether white or coloured, face grave risk of disaster in this country where capital for the employment of native labour is essential. I would only make one reservation; and that is that Indian market gardeners who, as I myself saw at Kilossa, are growing excellent vegetables, should be given reasonable opportunity for acquiring land for cultivation in the vicinity of towns and villages instead of depending, as they now do, on short leases from natives or others. Apart from this, it is enough that Indians with capital have equal opportunity to acquire large estates. A Kilossa shopkeeper has already a controlling interest in an adjoining cotton estate; and it is open to any Indian with sufficient capital to make similar investments. Later, when the country has developed, smaller holdings may become practicable, and the Indian cultivator will then again have equal opportunity. But the proposal to settle small cultivators in a special Indian reserve is, in my opinion, unsound both politically and economically, and I recommend that it should now be dropped.

No. 2.

Letter from the Government of India to His Majesty's Secretary of State for India, No. 9, dated the 10th February 1921.

We have the honour to refer to the correspondence ending with our Despatch No. 35, Emigration, dated the 25th December 1919, regarding the question of Indian colonisation in Tanganyika Territory, formerly known as German East Africa.

2. The immediate issue raised in your Despatch No. 101, Public, dated the 21st August 1919, was Lord Milner's offer, conveyed in Colonial Office letter No. 13721, dated the 4th April 1919, to discuss the possibility of encouraging the settlement of Indians of a desirable class (preferably agriculturists and ex-service men) in some part of the Territory. Lord Milner was unable at that time to commit himself to any definite policy; but he recognised that India, in view of her services in the war and on general grounds of Imperial policy, had a claim to consideration in the matter. It was assumed by you that the suggestion was that some area or areas, sparsely inhabited by natives but suitable for colonisation, would be set apart as a reserve where Indians could practise their traditional methods of agriculture under a system of small holdings. You recognised the need for previous examination of local conditions by a deputation of experts, but in view of the disturbed condition of the country and the probability of an administrative redistribution of territory when the mandates were assigned, you considered that the despatch of any such deputation should be postponed. Meanwhile, however, you asked for our general views on the following points:—

(1) Whether from the point of view of India we regarded it as desirable and practicable to attempt an organised scheme of settlement.

(2) How far a suitable type of agriculturist, ex-service men or others, would be attracted by the prospects of free settlement in the Territory so far as could be judged in the light of the information at present available as to its physical characteristics and potentialities.

(3) Whether we should be prepared to encourage such colonisation and how far we should be prepared to go in giving financial assistance.

3. The Government of India referred these questions to the Local Governments of the provinces from which settlers would be most likely to go. Copies of our Commerce Department's letter No. 825 D., dated the 19th December 1919, and of the replies of the Local Governments, are appended to this despatch. Sir Benjamin Robertson also was requested by us, with the consent of the Colonial Office, to break his return journey from South Africa at Dar-es-Salaam and discuss the matter informally with His Excellency the Governor of Tanganyika Territory. A copy of his report, dated the 4th August 1920, is appended. It will be understood that Sir Benjamin Robertson only stayed for a fortnight in Tanganyika Territory, and the area which he was personally able to visit was comparatively small. His report, as he himself has insisted, should in no way be regarded as a substitute for the report of the deputation of experts, including Indian representatives, which we had contemplated. At the same time, we attach great importance to the views of Sir Benjamin Robertson, who not only has long experience of agricultural colonisation in India itself, but also has exceptional knowledge regarding the settlement of Indians overseas.

4. The Local Governments, as we had anticipated, have found it difficult to give a satisfactory reply to the points referred to them without more detailed and definite information regarding agricultural conditions in Tanganyika Territory. Provisionally, however, they are generally of opinion that agriculturists of the required type would not be attracted by the scheme.

The Government of the Central Provinces consider that the Central Provinces are not likely to provide any appreciable number of colonists.

The Government of Bihar and Orissa are of opinion that there is no prospect of inducing agriculturists to emigrate to Tanganyika Territory from that province.

The Madras Government say :—

> " Agriculturists of a suitable type are not likely to be attracted by the prospects of free settlement held out to them under the scheme. As a class they are much too conservative to migrate to, or settle in, an unknown country like East Africa, and even if they go they would not take their women folk."

The Government of the United Provinces say :—

> " There seems grave doubt as to whether the class of settler would be available. The Allahabad Zamindars' Association considers that the best form of colonisation would be to make large grants of land to Indian princes and big landowners. The Lieutenant-Governor considers that rapid success in any experiment in colonisation must not be looked for in view of the reluctance to emigrate of the classes to which ex-Service men generally belong. Religious scruples and deep attachment to their homes are characteristic of these men."

The Punjab Government, however, are more hopeful that a scheme of colonisation might gradually be developed from small beginnings :—

> " From the papers forwarded with Mr. Ley's letter, Sir Edward Maclagan, however, thinks that a fully developed scheme of colonisation could not be started in the immediate future, and that it would be necessary, as a preliminary, to send a few suitable settlers who would be tempted by large grants and large concessions and who would be given facilities for occasional return to India. If this were done, His Honour believes that a score or two adventurous agriculturists of a good type would be found in the Punjab who would be attracted to German East Africa; and if their settlement were successful, a further scheme could then be developed with a view to attracting larger numbers with their families."

The Bombay Government are unable, on the material now before them, to express a definite opinion. In particular, they consider it essential that the political and administrative questions to which we referred in our Despatch of the 25th December 1919 should first be settled.

5. The report of Sir Benjamin Robertson shows that there are serious practical objections to any scheme of colonisation under a system of small holdings. It is true that the area which he personally inspected was comparatively small, and it is not suggested that the difficulties enumerated by him would necessarily be encountered throughout the Territory. But, on the information now before us, it must be admitted that there is, *primâ facie*, reason to accept the view of the Tanganyika Administration that the country, in its present state of development, is not suited to the small settler.

6. We are thus forced to this conclusion. On the one hand, the replies of the Local Governments to our enquiries show that small Indian farmers are not likely at present to be attracted by the prospect of settlement in Tanganyika. On the other hand, we are informed that a system of small holdings will not be practicable in Tanganyika, at any rate until the country is more developed. In other words, for the present at any rate, it would appear that the demand is only for large estates, and only large estates are likely to succeed.

7. But, as Sir Benjamin Robertson has emphasised, there is another aspect of the case. On the one hand, we cordially agree that it would be contrary to the principles enunciated in Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations to exclude the native peoples from part of the Territory in order to form an Indian reserve. On the other hand, as you yourself suggested in your Despatch of the 21st August 1919, there is a danger that the reservation of an area for exclusive Indian settlement might be made a pretext for the imposition of restrictions on Indians in other parts of the Territory. It might be argued with some speciousness that preferential treatment in one area implied differential treatment elsewhere. The concession of an Indian reserve might even be regarded as an admission of the principle of race-segregation.

8. It appears from Sir Benjamin Robertson's report that the Indians who are already settled in East Africa, accept the view that the interests of the natives should be considered first; and at the same time, on their own behalf, they ask for nothing more than equal rights and equal opportunity with the nationals of other Members of the League of Nations. Their position is clearly stated in a letter, dated the 19th January 1920, from the Secretary of the British East Africa Indian Association to the Honourable Mr. K. K. Chanda, which was published in the Indian Press.

> "We feel that by claiming 'special' treatment in a particular place we shall forfeit our claim for 'equal' treatment everywhere. What we want is equal treatment in both East and South Africa, and in fact throughout the British Empire. By asking for special treatment in German East Africa we shall be violating the fundamental principle which we have all along been fighting for, namely, that there shall be no differentiation in the treatment meted out to various sections of His Majesty's subjects."

9. The terms of the Mandate for German East Africa, which was forwarded to us with letter No. J. and P. 1521, dated the 1st April 1920, from your Assistant Secretary, Judicial and Public Department, guarantees equal treatment for the nationals of all Members of the League of Nations. This guarantee was specifically confirmed by Lord Milner's assurance, conveyed in Colonial Office letter No. 15886/20, dated the 12th April 1920, that "Indian settlers in the territory will be treated on a footing of "complete equality with other settlers, and that no discrimination will be made in "their disfavour." If this guarantee is respected, in spirit as well as in letter, the claims of the East African Indians will be satisfied.

10. We agree with Sir Benjamin Robertson that the position which the East African Indians have taken up is right, and we believe that it will be generally supported by public opinion throughout India. We have opposed, and will continue to oppose, unfair discrimination against our nationals overseas. We desire no discrimination in their favour. We ask for no more than equal rights. We can be satisfied with nothing less.

11. It follows that we accept Sir Benjamin Robertson's recommendation that the proposal to settle small cultivators in an Indian reserve should be dropped. There will be no need, therefore, for us to send a deputation of experts to examine local conditions and select an area for Indian colonisation. At the same time, we trust that no obstacle will be placed in the way of Indians who may wish to acquire land on the same footing as the nationals of other Members of the League of Nations. We are informed by Sir Benjamin Robertson that the intention of the local authorities is first to sell by auction the existing German estates, which are now leased to contractors, and afterwards to alienate vacant Crown lands from time to time as occasion offers. Sir Benjamin Robertson was assured by His Excellency the Governor that the same opportunity would be given to Indian purchasers as to purchasers of other nationalities. We would also ask that we should be given ample notice of such sales to enable us to answer enquiries from intending purchasers who are resident in India, and also to encourage colonisation, should we so desire, on the lines suggested by the Punjab Government.

12. We would also request that the attention of the local authorities should be invited to Sir Benjamin Robertson's recommendation that Indian market gardeners should be given reasonable opportunity for acquiring land for cultivation in the vicinity of towns and villages, instead of depending, as they now do, on short leases from natives or others. It is understood that the transfer of land from natives to non-natives is ordinarily prohibited, but may be permitted, in accordance with Article 7 of the Mandate, with the previous consent of the public authorities. We would suggest that it should be represented to the authorities that consent in such cases should not, without good reason, be withheld.

13. In conclusion, we must refer once more to the point which we urged in our Despatch of the 25th December 1919, that administrative conditions in Tanganyika Territory should be such as to afford an absolute guarantee that Indians will stand on a footing of unquestioned equality with other settlers, of whatever nationality. The Mandate guarantees economic equality, but, as we understand, makes no provision for political equality. On the contrary, Article 11 of the Mandate authorises the Mandatory to constitute the territory into an administrative union with the adjacent territories under his own sovereignty or control. In view of recent events, we may perhaps be pardoned if we regard with grave misgiving the possibility of administrative union with the adjacent territory of Kenya Colony. If there is no political equality, we fear that even the guarantee of economic equality may prove to be illusory. Experience elsewhere has shown how easy it is to subvert nominal equality by administrative action. We need only recall the exclusion of Indians from the uplands of Kenya "as a matter of administrative convenience." As the Government of Bombay have expressed it, in their letter No. 12267, dated the 9th December 1920, which is appended to this Despatch:—

> "They consider it absolutely necessary in the first instance to know what form of government will prevail in German East Africa and what class of people will have power to legislate and to conduct the administration. While it is true in theory that under the Mandate every resident of an original member of the League of Nations will have equal rights in the new territory, everything will depend in practice upon the people who exercise the governing power."

14. In our Despatch of the 25th December 1919, we suggested the desirability of associating representatives of the Government of India in the preliminary discussions regarding the system of administration to be set up in the Territory. But Lord Milner replied, in Colonial Office letter No. 1795/19, dated the 6th March 1920, that as the system of administration had already been settled, our proposal could not usefully be considered. We understand, however, from a subsequent letter from the Colonial Office, No. 15886/20, dated the 12th April 1920, that Lord Milner referred only to the organisation of Government Departments and staff, and not to the political rights of the inhabitants of the Territory. We may say here that we fully recognise that the well-being and development of the native peoples should, under the conditions of the Mandate, be the first principle of the administration of the Territory. And we may perhaps add that Sir Benjamin Robertson was convinced by his experience in East Africa that it was not desirable, during the period of tutelage, that the Government should in any way be controlled by alien settlers, of whatever nationality. At the same time, our interests in Tanganyika Territory, both actual and prospective, are large. Their extent has not always, perhaps, been fully realised. To quote from Sir Benjamin Robertson's Report:—

> "In my opinion, Indians only require equal opportunity to enable them to play an important part in the development of the Territory. Indian traders, who with their families now number about 15,000, have penetrated to every corner of the country and practically monopolise the retail trade. The retail dealers are largely supplied by Indian merchants. And it is the policy of the European firms whose representatives I have met to work with the Indians and not against them. The door is open for the closest commercial relations between the Territory and India.
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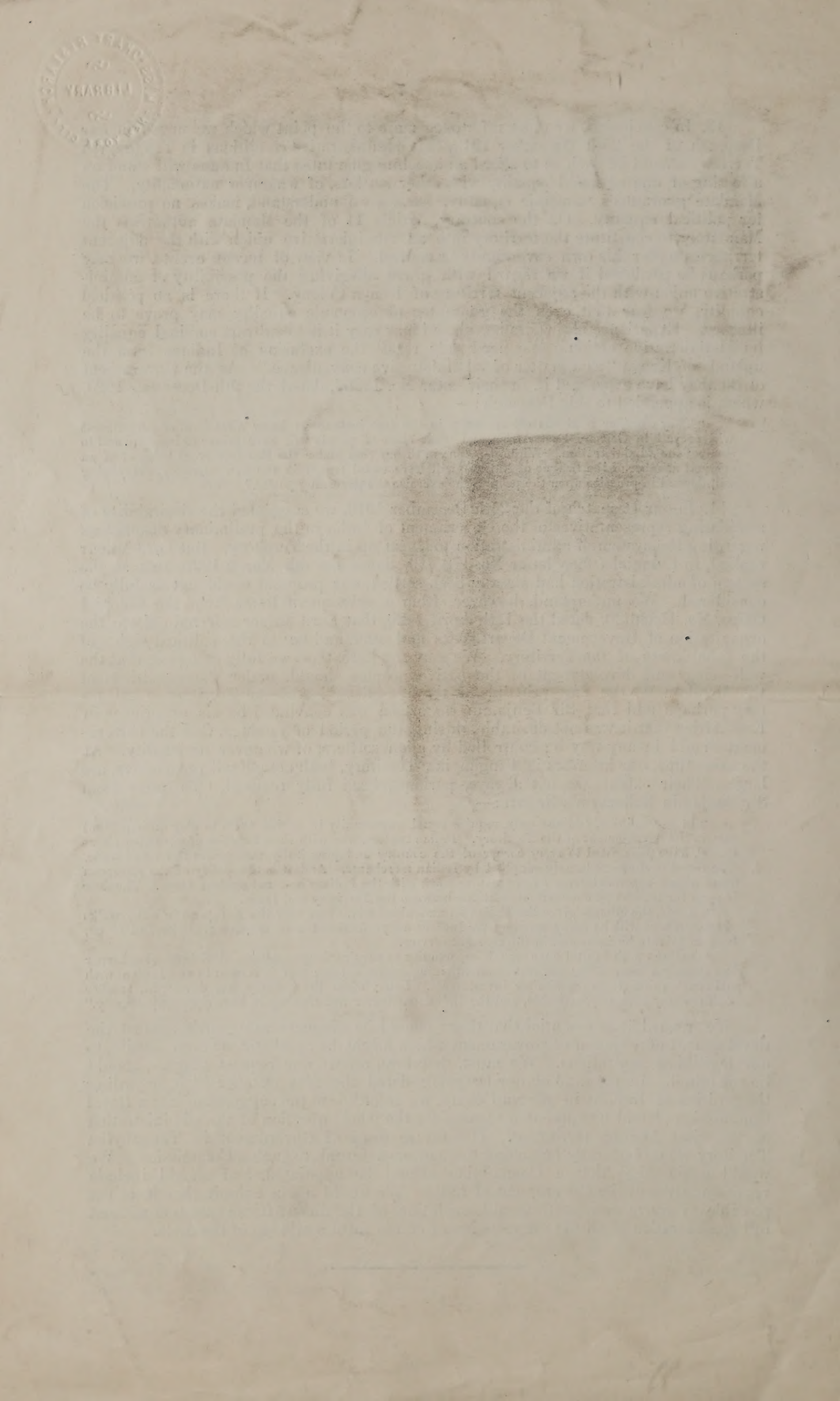
We regard it as essential that there should be adequate safeguards against the development of a system of Government which might be apathetic, or even hostile, to our legitimate aspirations. We must, therefore, repeat our request that we should be consulted. In para. 29 of our Despatch, dated the 21st October 1920, regarding the position of Indians in Kenya Colony, we referred to the suggestion that a Royal Commission should be appointed to consider the whole question of the administration of the East African territories. The future form of Government in Tanganyika Territory would naturally be among the matters referred to such a Commission. We would again urge that a Commission should be appointed, and should include representatives of the Government of India. We would again submit that it is not possible to arrive at a statesmanlike solution of the East African question without full consideration of all the interests involved and full knowledge of the facts.